

REMARKS

This application has been carefully reviewed in light of the Office Action dated July 15, 2005. Claims 1, 58 and 67 remain pending in the application, with Claim 60 having been cancelled herein. Claims 1 and 58 are the independent claims herein. Reconsideration and further examination are respectfully requested.

Claims 1, 58, 60 and 67 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph. The points noted with regard to the "or" conjunctive or disjunctive language has been attended to. The point noted with regard to "determining an incentive point" has also been attended to. Finally, the grammatical error regarding generating the message in Claim 60 has been attended to. Accordingly, withdrawal of the § 112 rejections is respectfully requested.

Claims 1, 58, 60 and 67 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(c), or alternatively under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) over U.S. Patent No. 6,629,134 (Hayward). Reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejections are respectfully requested.

The present invention concerns the return of used consumables by a user. According to one aspect of the invention, an information processing system that communicates with a terminal via the Internet receives participating information, indicating whether or not a user wishes to participate in a return service for returning a used consumable corresponding to a particular type of consumable. A participating flag corresponding to the user is set in a memory unit of the system in accordance with the participating information. Then, the system receives a request from the terminal for ordering a new consumable. In response to the request, the system transmits information for ordering the consumable to the terminal, whereby the user inputs data to order the new consumable and specifying the user's desire to return the used consumable, with the input

information being transmitted by the terminal back to the system. The system then transmits, to the terminal, one of a message (a) prompting the user to participate in the return service in a case where at least one participating flag corresponding to the user indicates that the user does not already participate in the return service, and (b) indicating a history regarding the return of the used consumable by the user and an incentive point for a discount toward the order for the new consumable, the amount of the incentive point corresponding to the history in a case where a participating flag corresponding to the user indicates that the user already participates in the return service.

With specific reference to the claims, amended independent Claim 1 is a processing method of ordering a new consumable to be used by a printer and returning a used consumable, used by the printer, being performed by an information processing system that communicates with a terminal via the Internet, the method comprising the steps of the information processing system receiving, from the terminal, participating information, indicating whether or not a user wishes to participate in a return service for returning a used consumable corresponding to a particular type of consumable, wherein the return service is provided by the system to allow the user to return the used consumable, the information processing system setting a participating flag corresponding to the user, which is managed by the information processing system, in a memory unit in accordance with the received participating information, wherein the information processing system manages a plurality of participating flags corresponding to different types of consumables ordered by the user, the information processing system receiving, from the terminal, a request for ordering a new consumable, in response to receiving the request, the information processing system transmitting first information containing data fields for ordering the new consumable for display on a display screen of the terminal, whereby the

user inputs data into the data fields to order the new consumable and specifies in the data fields of the first information that the user desires to return the used consumable, the terminal transmitting the data input in the data fields for ordering the new consumable and specifying the user's desire to return the used consumable to the information processing system, and in response to receiving the input data for ordering the new consumable and specifying the user's desire to return the used consumable from the terminal, the information processing system transmitting second information for display on the screen of the terminal, the second information comprising one of a message (a) prompting the user to participate in the return service in a case where at least one participating flag corresponding to the user indicates that the user does not already participate in the return service, and (b) indicating a history regarding the return of the used consumable by the user and an incentive point for a discount toward the order for the new consumable, the amount of the incentive point corresponding to the history in a case where a participating flag corresponding to the user indicates that the user already participates in the return service.

Claim 58 includes features along the lines of Claim 1, but is more specifically directed to a return service.

The applied art is not seen to disclose or to suggest the features of Claims 1 and 58, and in particular, is not seen to disclose or to suggest at least the feature of an information processing system, in response to receiving input data from a user's terminal, for ordering a new consumable and specifying the user's desire to return a used consumable, the information processing system transmitting second information for display on a screen of the terminal, the second information comprising one of a message (a) prompting the user to participate in the return service in a case where at least one participating flag corresponding to the user indicates that the user does not already

participate in the return service, and (b) indicating a history regarding the return of the used consumable by the user and an incentive point for a discount toward the order for the new consumable, the amount of the incentive point corresponding to the history in a case where a participating flag corresponding to the user indicates that the user already participates in the return service.

Hayward is merely seen to disclose that, when a user buys a new device (e.g., a multifunction device), the user can register the device with the manufacturer so that they can obtain product support via the Internet. When, for example, an ink cartridge is low on ink, the user may be warned about the low ink level via a screen as shown in Fig. 4. If the ink level is low, the user can select a "buy now" option, whereby a link to a server is established and an order screen is downloaded to the user for them to order a new ink cartridge. Alternatively, if the user already has a new ink cartridge on-hand, they can select a "show me" button, whereby instructions are downloaded to the user's computer to inform the user of how to replace the ink cartridge in the printer. Thus, while Hayward may provide the ability to order a new ink cartridge, Hayward does not provide a return service to return a used consumable. Specifically, Hayward is not seen to disclose that, when a user submits an order for a new consumable, together with information specifying the user's desire to return a used consumable, that the system (server) transmits a message based on a participating flag set therein corresponding to the user. Moreover, Applicants fail to see anything, either inherently or explicitly, in Hayward in which a message is transmitted by the system to the user's terminal (a) prompting the user to participate in the return service, or (b) indicating a history and an incentive point for a discount toward the order. Thus, the present invention of Claims 1 and 58 is not believed to be anticipated by Hayward, nor would it have been obvious over Hayward.

In view of the foregoing amendments and remarks, amended independent Claims 1 and 58, as well as the claims dependent therefrom, are believed to be allowable.

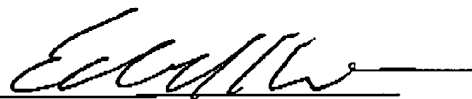
No other matters having been raised, the entire application is believed to be in condition for allowance and such action is respectfully requested at the Examiner's earliest convenience.

REQUEST FOR EXAMINER INTERVIEW

In the event that the Examiner finds the application is not yet in condition for allowance, he is respectfully requested to contact Applicants' undersigned representative prior to issuance of the next Office Action on the merits to discuss any outstanding issues so that Applicants can obtain the earliest possible allowance of this case.

Applicants' undersigned attorney may be reached in our Costa Mesa, California office by telephone at (714) 540-8700. All correspondence should continue to be directed to our below listed address.

Respectfully submitted,



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